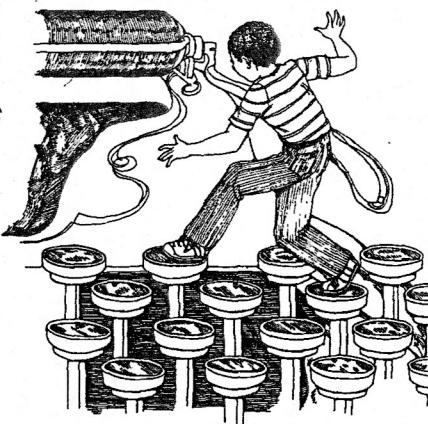


# Language Arts Multidisciplinary

## A Touch of Typing

by Mary Ellen Switzer

*An old standard sets  
new standards  
when used as part  
of the curriculum*



There's a "new" learning tool popping up in classrooms throughout the country—the typewriter. Although many of you have a typewriter or two in your classroom, you may not have considered teaching children to touch-type as a supplement to the regular curriculum. Of the many good reasons for teaching children how to type, perhaps the best is that it's a great motivator. Most children are fascinated by the machine and gain self-esteem as they learn a new skill. Typing can help children with eye-hand coordination and spelling skills. It can also stretch attention spans and give a boost to almost any curriculum area.

I've successfully taught typing to first-through sixth-grade students—usually one or two 30-minute typing lessons per week. Using this schedule, it usually takes about three months for youngsters to master the keyboard.

Following are some tips for setting up your own typing program and for reinforcing skills—typing and other—in an appealing, learning-filled way.

### Setting Up A Typing Center

The first step in establishing a typing center is to acquire a few typewriters. When you explain the value of teaching youngsters how to type, your school, parents or community members may be willing to donate some secondhand machines. If you join forces with several other teachers, you might have a better chance of convincing the administration that the project is worthwhile. Manual typewriters work best for beginners because they allow more control, though once they get

used to the keyboard, children often prefer the speed and smooth operation of electric models.

After you've acquired your machines, select a location for your center. You may decide to simply set up the center in a section of the classroom or, if your school building has a spare room, you and several other teachers might want to create a typing center room.

To interest the children in this new learning area, make it as colorful and attractive as possible. You'll probably want to include a large wall poster of the typing keyboard and a list of suggestions for good typing habits.

### First Lesson

The initial typing habits your students establish will determine how well they develop their skills during a whole class session, so stress with the kids the following procedures: sit up straight; keep feet flat on the floor; curl fingers over the keys and keep your eyes on the material being typed, not on the keys.

When everyone understands these procedures, give each child a typing folder with a duplicated picture of a typing keyboard attached to the front cover. Before beginning to type, the kids can practice their fingering on the keyboard chart and, later, as they take drill and practice turns on a typewriter, they can keep their work in the folders.

On the keyboard charts, introduce the children to the "home keys"—ASDF, JKLM and ;. Explain to them that they are to place their fingers on these keys when they begin to type and that from this

"ready position," they can reach up and down to all of the other keys. To help the kids keep these letters straight, you might want to mark them on the children's fingernails with a washable, light-color felt-tip pen. Then, as an initial typing drill ask the students to type as many words as they can, using just these "home keys."

When the children learn the position of a key, have them lightly color or check it off on their keyboard charts for an individualized record of their typing progress. You can include in each child's folder a separate checklist sheet for the nonletter keys—period, comma, etc.—and other typewriter features—shift key, carriage return and space bar. You can also include in this checklist other skills you want the children to practice, such as learning number keys and symbols.

Getting the children to keep their eyes on their papers, not on the keys, can be quite a task. To help a child get over the natural tendency to concentrate on the keys, cover his or her eyes and dictate the words to be typed. Or, have a child type a word three times—twice with eyes open, once with eyes closed.

Learning the rest of the keyboard is pretty much a matter of memorization and practice, so a good deal of drill will be necessary. If you have set up a typing corner in your classroom, the children can practice their skills during free moments in a variety of ways.

### Drill of the Week

You can avoid making typing practice tedious by trying some of the following drills. To increase typing speed while they practice the keyboard, the children can time themselves by using a three-minute egg timer. Each week give a short drill of such phrases as "ask a lad," "see-sled" and "save the earth." After typing the drill for three minutes, ask the children to circle the phrase every time they typed it and count the number of circles. Encourage the children to beat their own records on subsequent drills. Although I encourage the children to type accurately, I don't record their errors at this point. Initially, I just want them to get used to pressing the keys. Increase the complexity of the drill phrases as the children become more proficient. You can also let the children make up their own drill phrases to challenge themselves and their classmates.

For variety, the children can type a speed-drill phrase to music. When the music stops, the children circle the phrase each time they typed it. Or, to add zest and excitement, divide the children into teams and score "touchdowns," "home

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runs" or points every time a drill is typed. You can even hold a team contest for several days or a week—as long as you and the children want to play. After typing a drill, have the children place their papers in a special game box with their names and teams written at the top. Student scorekeepers can keep a record of the team scores and post the day's results on a large score sheet or on the chalkboard.

To encourage typing accuracy, give students a short drill phrase, such as "see a sled." Direct the kids to type the phrase over and over until they make an error, then stop typing. The object is to see who can type for the longest amount of time without making a mistake.

### Application

The following selection of curriculum-related typing activities are just samples of the many ways your students can use their new skill.

- **Punctuation.** When the children know the location of each punctuation key and understand its use, help them line up in the typewriter a sheet of pretyped sentences and then have them type in the proper punctuation. And, to give the kids practice with capitalization and the use of the shift key, have them practice typing the names of states, countries, days of the week, months and holidays. Or you might give them a list of sentences and have them type in the capital letters in the appropriate places.

- **Spelling Fun.** Have each child work with a partner to increase spelling skills. One partner can dictate the words from a spelling list while the other child types the words. Then they can trade jobs. Or, one partner can scramble the words in the spelling list and the other can try to unscramble the lists at the typewriter. One child can also write a list of spelling words, leaving a few blanks in each word. Then the partner can try to type in the missing letters. You may also want to tape-record spelling words and have a "listen and type" time for the class.

- **Typing Numbers.** Combine a typing and math assignment by having the children type the answers to addition, subtraction, multiplication and division problems. Younger students can type numbers up to 25 or 50. The kids can also practice typing numbers onto a duplicated calendar grid or they might type a restaurant menu, including items and prices.

- **Create a Group Story.** "The Adventures of Tim and His Magic Skateboard," "Mystery of the Missing Bicycle" and "The Mysterious Shadow" are a few catchy starters you might use to create a

class story. You may want to type a few sentences to start the story and then ask each child to contribute to the plot by typing in additional information. Have the kids take turns sitting at the typewriter, reading what the others have typed and then adding a short paragraph. A student volunteer can then read the completed story to the class.

- **Type a Class Newspaper.** Have the kids write rough drafts for newspaper stories at their desks. Possible topics include "Interview with the School Nurse," "If I Were Principal for the Day" and "Our School Wins the Soccer Game." After proofreading and correcting any errors, the children can type the articles. The kids can then submit their finished articles and, perhaps, artwork, to a class editor. You can place a "fun box" in the typing area for students to submit riddles and jokes or typed word games to use as "fillers" for the class newspaper. Either you or a student volunteer can type the final draft and you can then duplicate copies to send home to parents.

- **Typing Advertisements.** As a follow-up to the newspaper project, have the students type a classified ad to size—for example, 25 words or less—to sell a hypothetical item—car, piece of furniture and so on. Or, have the kids type ads for jobs, such as newspaper carriers, gardeners and baby-sitters.

- **Typing Poetry.** Ask the children to write two-line poems about their favorite colors or other topics and draw illustrations to go with them. When they type up their poems, compile them in a class poetry book.

- **Typing Designs.** Using any combination of letters, numbers or punctuation marks, students can type designs onto colorful paper. To do this they will have to use the carriage return to move the paper from left to right and to roll the paper up or down. These original designs give the effect of the popular computer printout pictures and offer an alternative to standard drawing techniques. After they've typed a few designs, the kids can try to type the outlines of pictures.

### Typing Grab Bag

Provide a grab bag of typing activities for children to pick from when they've completed other assignments. Type up various activities on large, multicolor index cards and laminate them for durability. You might write on the cards practice drills or short word games. Change the cards each month for variety. Here are a few grab bag ideas:

- **Wacky Animals.** Write several animal names on a card. The children are to

make up a wacky creature name by combining two of these words. Possible creatures are a "froghopper" and a "chicken cat." Have the kids type four sentences describing each new creature. The children complete the activity by drawing illustrations of their wacky creatures.

- **Movie and Television Reviews.** Ask students to type short reviews of their favorite movies or television shows.

- **Type a Twister.** Ask the children to type some tongue twisters. Provide a few samples as guides.

- **Fun With Proverbs** a few samples of proverbs, write a few more last word or a few words the children to type this sheet of paper and comp in his or her own words. few examples: An apple a day \_\_\_\_\_; Too many cooks \_\_\_\_\_; Don't cry over spilt milk \_\_\_\_\_.

- **Typing Letters.** Ask students to type short letters to friends or to birthday parties or other events.

- **Alphabetizing.** Have the children type a short list of words in alphabetical order.

### Type a Memory

At the end of your typing unit, have the children type contributions to a booklet. They might include drawings of sports, animals, hobbies, whatever subjects particular to them. After the kids illustrate and give it an imaginative title, the booklet will have a lasting reminder of their typing skills.

During the 10 years I've been teaching, I've received feedback from many parents and from the kids themselves. One youngster put it: "I like to type because it helps me with spelling. It makes me remember the words better. It's also fun to type up!" As you can see from the comments from your students, more than an interest in learning to type just might be the "key" to their motivation with learning.

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